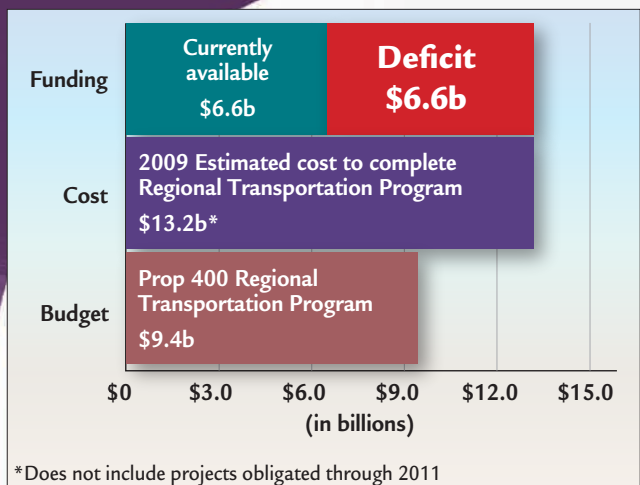


South Mountain

Transportation Corridor Study



Estimated freeway program costs

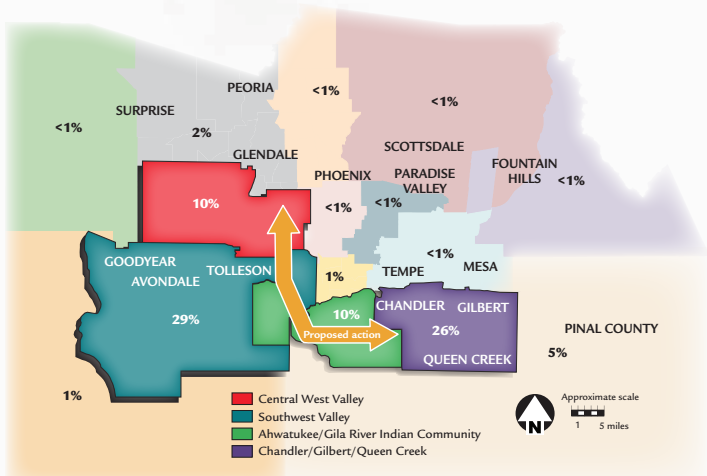
In October 2009, MAG's Regional Council voted to approve the revised regional plan which included these changes. For more information regarding the RTP, please visit the MAG Web site at www.mag.maricopa.gov.

What is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that EISs be prepared for all major federal actions (or those involving federal funding) that could significantly affect the environment. The initial assessment of significant environmental impacts is published as a Draft EIS for public and agency review and comment. In its *Purpose and Need* chapter, the Draft EIS documents the need(s) for the proposed project, describes what the purpose of the project is, and discusses the likely societal, transportation, and economic consequences of not implementing the proposed project.

Determination of what type of project would best meet the identified project purpose and need involves

examining and refining a range of appropriate alternatives (including nonfreeway alternatives) through use of an Alternatives Development process. The alternatives to be studied in detail (see map on the first page) includes an option of not implementing the project; this is known as the No Action Alternative. The Draft EIS also documents potential impacts of the alternatives to the social, economic and natural environment, and includes measures to avoid, reduce or otherwise mitigate impacts. Finally, Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act seeks to protect the use of public recreational land, significant wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or historic resources by determining impacts and evaluating measures available to minimize impacts to these resources.



Addressing mobility needs in the MAG region

Seventy-five percent of vehicles forecast to use the proposed freeway were shown to have origins and/or destinations near the proposed South Mountain Freeway. A freeway would be used by vehicles from the east and west areas of the MAG region, and would address east-west mobility needs.

Since 2001, ADOT and FHWA have implemented an extensive public and agency outreach program. Next steps and future opportunities to participate in the study process are outlined in the graphic on this page.

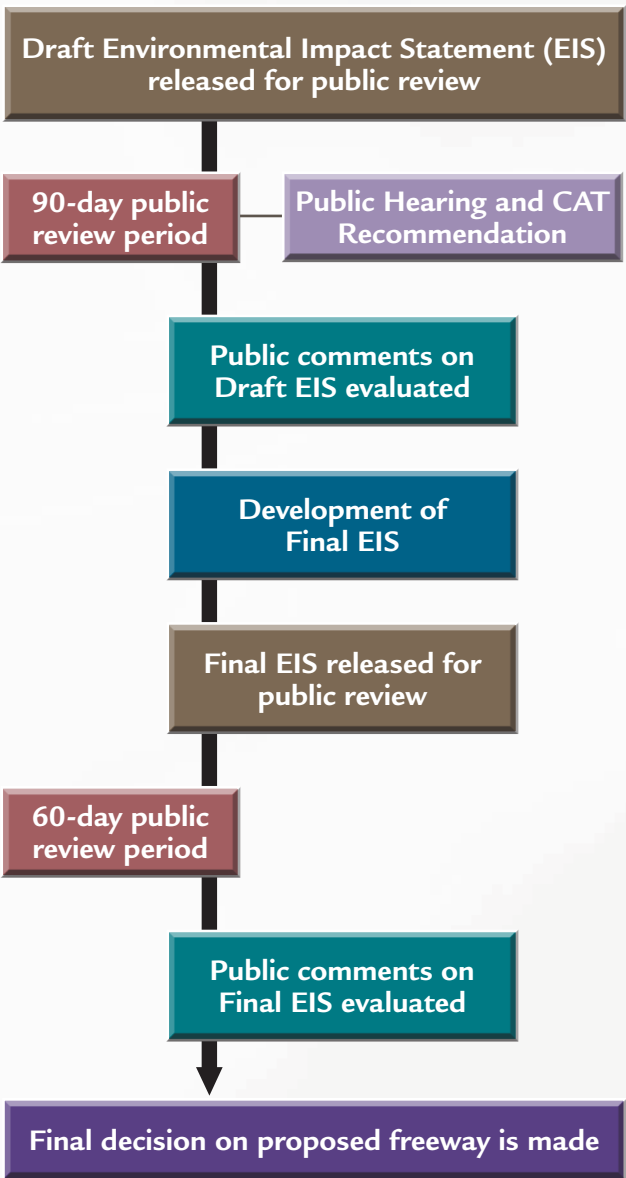
Citizens Advisory Team

Since 2002, ADOT and FHWA have worked with a Citizens Advisory Team that represents various groups in the South Mountain Freeway Study Area, holding approximately 56 meetings. Beginning in early 2010, the CAT will resume its work to review aspects of the proposed freeway and recommend whether it should be built. Following the public release of the Draft EIS, the CAT will provide a final recommendation of "action" or "no-action" for the proposed South Mountain Freeway.

Members of the community are welcome to attend the CAT meetings; time is generally available at the end of each meeting for public comments and questions. The information to be discussed at these upcoming meetings, and the information presented at the previous meetings, can be found on the study Web site at www.SouthMountainFreeway.com or by calling the project hotline.

Upon completion of the Administrative Draft EIS, it will be reviewed by FHWA and other governmental agencies. Following federal approval for public release of the Draft EIS, at least one public hearing will be held with an associated 90-day public comment period. The Final EIS will be available for public review during a 60-day comment period. After considering comments received on the Final EIS, FHWA will issue a Record of Decision. The Record of Decision will identify the selected alternative for the proposed project. If a build alternative is selected, MAG will allocate funding. In addition, ADOT and FHWA will continue to seek input from the public, agencies, and jurisdictions regarding the proposed freeway through the design phase and construction, if a build alternative is selected.

What are the next steps?



We are here

1983	1985	1988	1994	1996	1999	2001	Summer/Fall 2001	Fall/Winter 2001	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	June 2006	Fall 2009	2010 >>>>
The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) prepares planning studies for the Phoenix metropolitan area that identify corridors for an integrated freeway network.	Maricopa County voters approve a half-cent sales tax to fund the MAG's Regional Freeway System.	A Design Concept Report (DCR) and a state-level Environmental Assessment (EA) are completed for the South Mountain Freeway.	Due to a funding shortfall, ADOT identifies the South Mountain Freeway as an "unfunded segment."	A consortium of private companies proposes to build the South Mountain Freeway as a toll road. The consortium would later withdraw its proposal.	ADOT announces plans to resume completion of the Regional Freeway System, including an unspecified portion of the South Mountain Transportation Corridor.	ADOT begins preparing a new L/DCR and EIS to examine a broad range of alternatives to address the transportation needs in the southwest valley. Public input efforts begin.	The study team collects baseline information and issues on the transportation corridor.	The study team determines that there is a purpose and need to continue the study.	ADOT, FHWA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concur on the three build alternatives plus options. These are carried forward into the Draft EIS for more detailed analysis.	Voters approve funding MAG's <i>Regional Transportation Plan</i> - including the South Mountain Freeway.	Public information meetings held. Expansive public input efforts continue throughout the study.	ADOT announces the W55 (55th Avenue) Alternative as the "preliminary preferred alternative" based on community input, economic impacts, environmental factors, and traffic analysis.	MAG revises the RTP to include changes to South Mountain Freeway to include reducing the freeway to eight lanes and shifting the Western Section alignment to 59th Avenue (W59).	Publication of Draft EIS and public hearing(s). Expected final decision on the South Mountain Freeway.

For more information regarding this study, please visit the study Web site at www.SouthMountainFreeway.com.

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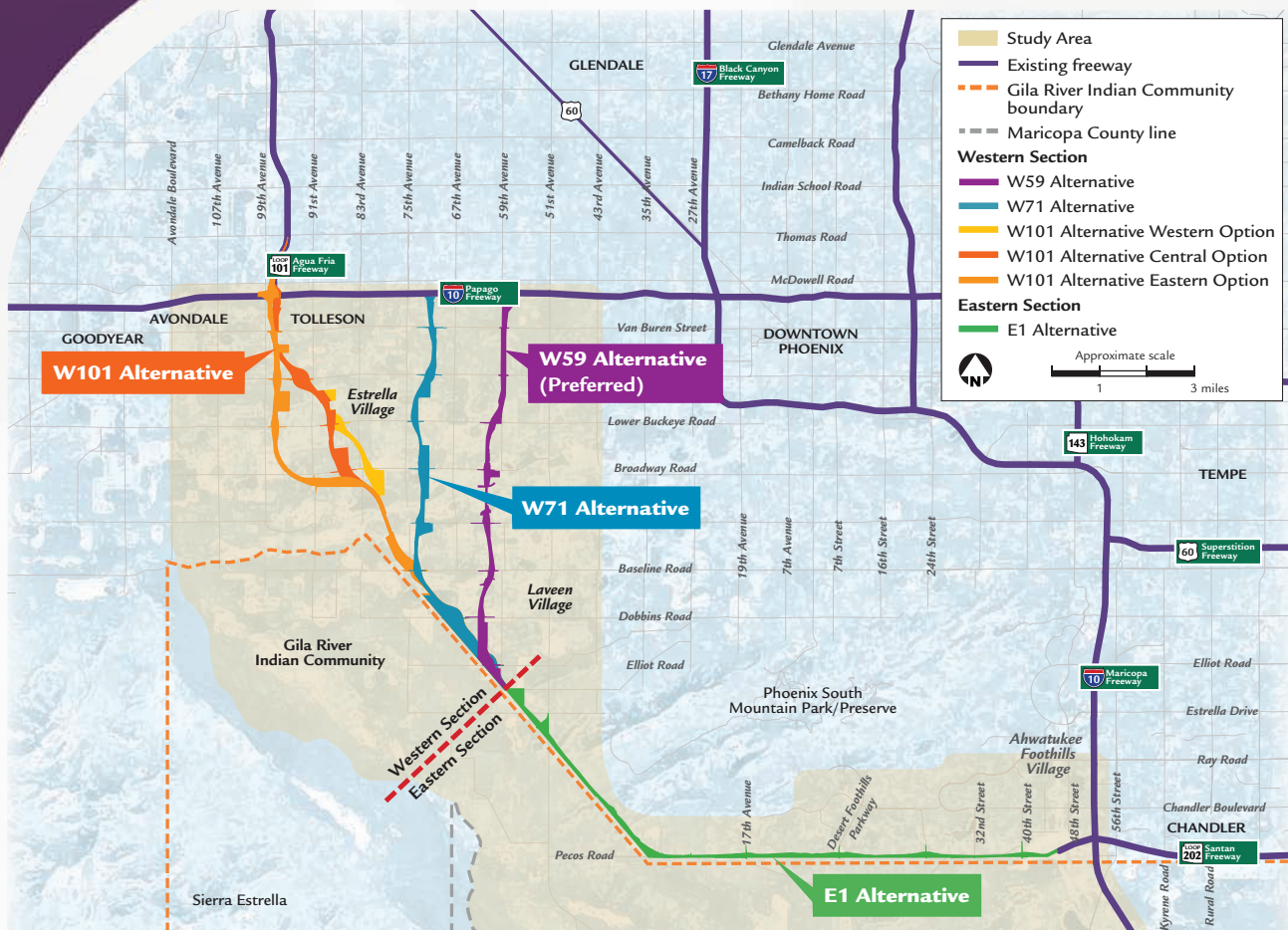
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Alternatives studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement



For more information regarding this study, please visit the study Web site at www.SouthMountainFreeway.com.

How to Contact Us

If you have any questions or comments about the South Mountain Transportation Corridor Study, please contact:

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Phoenix, AZ 85018

This document is available in Spanish by calling 602.712.7006.
Este documento está disponible en Español llamando 602.712.7006

What is the status of the study?

The study team, led by the Arizona Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, continues to follow the federal process defined by the National Environmental Policy Act, to complete a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the study. Currently, ADOT is revising the Administrative Draft EIS, and Location and Design Concept Report to include changes to the Maricopa Association of Governments' *Regional Transportation Plan*. These changes include reducing the overall "footprint" of the freeway to eight lanes (three general-purpose lanes and one HOV lane in each direction) and evaluating a revised connection with Interstate 10 at 59th Avenue.

Why have these changes occurred?

Maricopa County's half-cent sales tax for transportation projects, approved through

Proposition 400 in 2004, is the RTP's major funding source and provides more than half of the revenue.

Responding to the budget shortfall created by declining revenue, MAG began to study methods to reduce freeway project costs. Additionally, during the South Mountain Freeway study the public expressed concern about the number of proposed residential and business acquisitions and about some of the potential impacts of the proposed freeway. Acknowledging these community concerns and addressing declining revenues, strategies were examined to reduce impacts including project costs and needed right-of-way. For the South Mountain Freeway Study, this analysis resulted in two key changes:

- reduce the proposed freeway to eight lanes (from the previous 10-lane concept), thereby reducing the right-of-way needed; and
- shift the Western Section alignment between Lower Buckeye Road and I-10 to connect at 59th Avenue (rather than 55th Avenue).



February 2010